

COVID-19 Prevention Guidance for Overnight Camps

This guidance document outlines practical prevention strategies to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in overnight camp settings. This guide to overnight camping supplements the [COVID-19 Prevention Guidance for Youth, Student, and Child Care Programs](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/socialdistance.pdf) (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/socialdistance.pdf). Overnight camps can begin operating July 1, 2020.

Please ensure that your program is following the guidance outlined in the linked document above, including developing a program-specific plan. A template for a program-specific plan is available at [StaySafeMN: Stay Safe Guidance for All Business Entities \(staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp). Camps can determine how best to implement these guidelines within their unique programming.

General requirements

- Contact local municipalities (or county government) near the camp location to ensure they are aware of the camp's activities. Share your COVID-19 preparedness plan with them.
- Discuss precautions you are taking and strategies you can implement that will help mitigate transmission of COVID-19 between the local community and camp.
- Discuss access to testing if someone in the camp community needs it.
- Communicate with families before camping begins to set expectations for participating in the camp's program this summer. Communication should include the strategies to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 exposure in the camp environment and notice to families that strategies may change if the level of community transmission requires disruption of programming.
 - For example, everyone would need to be sent home if there is a surge in COVID-19 cases in the camp community or if a stay-at-home order is issued while camp is in session.
- It is strongly recommended to limit participation in camp programming to campers and staff who live in Minnesota or bordering states.
- Review the CDC's resource for initial considerations about whether or not to operate the camp program: [Suggestions for Youth and Summer Camps \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/summer-camps.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/summer-camps.html).

Support a safe and healthy camp environment

- Follow social norms and health etiquette guidance in [COVID-19 Prevention Guidance for Youth, Student, and Child Care Programs](#) (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/socialdistance.pdf).
 - Consider using the American Camp Association’s [Suggested Camp Supplies and Materials for 2020 Camp Season](#) (www.acacamps.org/sites/default/files/resource_library/operations-guide/ehe-suggested-camp-supplies.pdf).
- Engage campers and staff in developing communications or creative strategies to limit the spread of COVID-19 (e.g., develop a competition around creating the new camp greeting to replace hugs or high-fives).
- While outdoor recreational facilities may be open, Minnesotans are discouraged from engaging in unnecessary travel. Camps should do their part to help campers limit their travel—for example, by providing supplies on site and thinking ahead about what other supplies may be needed.
- Ask staff to be mindful of how their behavior affects the health of others in the camp community. Educate staff about the importance of maintaining physical distancing of 6 feet at all times, including while socializing with others on their time off.

Face covering requirements

- Require staff and campers to wear face coverings over their mouth and nose when required by Executive Order 20-81. See [Executive Orders from Governor Walz](#) (mn.gov/governor/news/executiveorders.jsp):
 - In the context of overnight camp settings, the Executive Order requires staff, visitors, and campers to wear face coverings in all indoor areas.
 - This requirement does not apply to private sleeping quarters (i.e., an enclosed private room that is not shared with persons who are not members of the same household).
 - The Executive Order does not require children 5 years old and younger to wear face coverings and children under 2 should never wear a face covering. The Executive Order also does not require face coverings when a person is unable to tolerate wearing a face covering because of a medical condition, mental health condition, or disability.
 - The Executive Order allows people to temporarily remove face coverings in certain circumstances, provided that social distancing is maintained, including:
 - When eating or drinking.
 - When swimming or participating in another activity that would get the face covering wet (a face covering should never be worn in the water or when wet).
 - When participating in an organized sport or other physical activity when the level of exertion would make it difficult to wear a face covering.
 - When communicating with a person who is deaf or hearing impaired or has a disability, medical condition, or mental health condition that makes communication with a face covering difficult.

- When performing or public speaking, or playing an instrument that cannot be played with a face covering.
- When staff are working alone, including when alone in an office, a room, a cubicle with walls that are higher than face level, a vehicle, or an enclosed or separated work area.
- When sleeping or going to sleep in sleeping quarters (e.g., a dorm, bunk house, tent, or other shared sleeping space) that are shared between persons who are not members of the same household.
- For more detailed guidance about the Executive Order’s face covering requirements, recommendations, and exemptions, refer to the following resources:
 - [Face Covering Requirements and Recommendations under Executive Order 20-81 \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facecover.html\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facecover.html)
 - [Frequently Asked Questions About the Requirement to Wear Face Coverings \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facecoverfaq.html\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facecoverfaq.html)
 - [Best Practices for Masks: Considerations for People with Disabilities and Special Health Needs \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/guidemasks.pdf\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/guidemasks.pdf)
- Wearing a face covering is not a substitute for frequent handwashing, avoiding touching the face, and practicing social distancing, which are our best tools to help prevent the spread of illness.
- Train all staff how to effectively use face coverings. See [How to Wear Masks \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/how-to-wear-cloth-face-coverings.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/how-to-wear-cloth-face-coverings.html).

Conduct daily health checks

- Encourage a culture of daily health checks. Work with in-house health staff to implement daily screening, including temperature checks and screening for new symptoms.
 - Consider asking parents to send a digital thermometer to camp with their child so they can take their own temperature each morning.
- Refer to the “Promote health checks” section in [COVID-19 Prevention Guidance for Youth, Student, and Child Care Programs \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/socialdistance.pdf\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/socialdistance.pdf).
 - Ensure all staff have proper training on recognizing symptoms that are consistent with COVID-19.
 - Because the situation is fluid, look for updated guidance on symptoms of COVID-19 at [Symptoms of Coronavirus \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html).

Make a plan for isolating sick staff or campers

- Have a plan if staff or campers get sick, based on the guidance in this section.

- Follow exclusion guidance and isolate symptomatic staff and campers: [COVID-19 Decision Tree for People in Schools, Youth, and Child Care Programs \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/exguide.pdf\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/exguide.pdf).
 - Plan to have a cabin or area that can be used to isolate a symptomatic staff member, volunteer, or camper. Identify a bathroom or stall that could be used only by people who are sick. Ensure there is enough space for multiple people placed at least 6 feet apart if more than one participant becomes ill.
 - Ensure that they have hygiene supplies available, including a face covering, facial tissues, and alcohol-based hand rub.
 - Identify one or two staff who will bring food and hydration, and who will check on staff or campers who are sick while you wait for them to be picked up.
 - Limit the number of staff who have face-to-face interactions with people who are sick.
- Make a plan with parents before summer program sessions that start with expectations if their child becomes ill while at camp. Parents should be prepared to pick up their child as soon as possible if they become ill with symptoms consistent with COVID-19. This should be regardless of test results at camps that have the capacity and choose to conduct testing.

Plan for access to health care and testing

MDH recommends staff and campers who are ill with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 be separated, sent home, and referred to their health care provider for testing.

- Before camp begins, work with your local public health agency to plan for access to health care and COVID-19 testing to address situations where there may be delays in sending ill staff or campers home.
- Questions to consider asking your local public health agency include:
 - Is there adequate access to testing should a staff or camper become ill with symptoms consistent with COVID-19?
 - How long will it take to receive results?
- Contact your local public health agency before using the local health care system, except in the case of an emergency.
- Have a plan for quarantining close contacts where a person has a lab-confirmed or clinically diagnosed case of COVID-19.
- Staff or campers who have had close contact with a person diagnosed with COVID-19 will need to be separated and sent home for their quarantine period. Follow the plan made in advance with parents and staff for getting them home.
- If a close contact of a staff or camper from home is diagnosed with COVID-19 within 14 days of that person arriving at camp, separate them and follow the plan made in advance to get them home.

Follow recommendations for group sizes

- Follow social distancing guidelines in [COVID-19 Prevention Guidance for Youth, Student, and Child Care Programs \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/socialdistance.pdf\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/socialdistance.pdf) including:
- Within the program, create and maintain groups of the same staff, volunteers, and campers, with a maximum number of 10 people for indoor activities and up to 25 people for outdoor activities.
 - Camps should not feel pressured to increase groups to 25 people in outdoor settings. The first priority is to take time to feel comfortable about bringing kids together.
- Adapt practices to allow physical distancing of at least 6 feet.
- If social distancing is not possible with the group size, then the number of participants must be reduced.

Establish plans for safe housing

- Reduce the number of participants staying in cabins to allow for campers and staff to spread out.
 - Maintain the same cabin groups of the same staff and campers of 10 people or fewer.
 - Staff-only cabins need to follow the same guidelines of 10 people or fewer.
- Ideally, participants should maintain 6 feet of social distancing while in cabins.
 - Maintain good air flow in cabins as much as possible, keeping windows open as weather allows.
 - Have a designated area to keep personal belongings of campers and staff separate from each other's belongings.
- Consider head-to-toe sleeping arrangements.
- MDH does not recommend wearing face coverings while sleeping.
- Clean high-use surfaces daily.
- Limit cabin access only to people who reside in that cabin.
- Camps that use tents for housing should adhere to the same guidelines listed above. Additional guidance for wilderness trips is provided below.

Shared bathrooms

- Ensure routine cleaning and disinfecting of bathrooms.
- Create showering schedules that limit the number of people using the bathroom at one time.
- Encourage campers and staff to bring their own toiletries from home to avoid using shared supplies.
- Post signs encouraging campers and staff to properly wash their hands.
 - [Why Hand Hygiene is Important and When to Wash Your Hands \(www.health.state.mn.us/people/handhygiene/why/index.html\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/people/handhygiene/why/index.html).
 - [Handwashing: Clean Hands Save Lives \(www.cdc.gov/handwashing/materials.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/materials.html).

Consider options for activities

- Follow these activity guidelines to maintain safe practices while congregating indoors: [COVID-19 Prevention Guidance for Youth, Student, and Child Care Programs \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/socialdistance.pdf\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/socialdistance.pdf).
- Adhere to the rule of limiting groups to 10 people or fewer. If social distancing cannot be attained with the group size, then the number of participants must be reduced.
- Whenever possible, implement programming that refrains from intermixing groups. If intermixing groups is necessary (e.g., sheltering indoors together due to severe weather), limit the number of groups that intermix and keep records of staff and campers.
 - These steps will help minimize transmission and also allow for swift contact tracing if needed.

Shared equipment

- Do not share equipment among people whenever possible.
 - For example, consider designating paddles or tennis rackets to campers at the beginning of the session, or asking families to send them with campers from home whenever feasible.
- Clean high-touch surfaces of equipment between uses.

Swimming

- Do not use pools or beaches that are open to the public.
- Maintain physical distancing of 6 feet while swimming or playing in a beachfront area.
- Limit camp's private waterfronts to a maximum of 25 people at a time.
- Do not wear face coverings while swimming.
- Follow guidance on [Reopening of Public Swimming Pool and Aquatic Facilities \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/poolreopen.pdf\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/poolreopen.pdf).

Singing

- Be mindful that there is evidence that COVID-19 has rapidly spread among groups of people singing together in indoor environments.
 - Learn more at [High SARS-CoV-2 Attack Rate Following Exposure at a Choir Practice — Skagit County, Washington, March 2020 \(www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6919e6.htm\)](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6919e6.htm).
- Consider not holding singing sessions, or sing outdoors with people **more** than 6 feet apart.
- See also: [Music Activities and Performances During COVID-19 \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/musicguide.pdf\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/musicguide.pdf).

Sports

- Limit sports activities to groups of a maximum number of 10 people for indoor activities, and up to 25 people per group for outdoor activities. Do not have intermixing between groups.
- Keep any play or interaction between players contactless.

- For example, kick a soccer ball back and forth, but do not allow for stealing the ball where contact between players may occur.
- Follow [COVID-19 Sports Guidance for Youth and Adults](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/sportsguide.pdf) (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/sportsguide.pdf).

Horseback riding

- Maintain the same social-distancing best practices as with other activities. Staff should wear a face covering when assisting campers to mount horses.
- Ride outdoors whenever possible versus using indoor arenas.
- Encourage campers and staff to wash their hands or use hand sanitizer immediately before and after horseback riding.
- Clean reins, saddles, and other shared equipment between uses.

Wilderness trips

Travel in wilderness areas requires additional precautions to ensure a safe experience for everyone. Camps should consult with their boards and medical advisors while weighing the risks of implementing programming during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Adhere to local travel restrictions when considering travel to other areas. See [Travel](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html) (www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html).
- Camps where core programming is not focused on wilderness trips should cancel trips to areas off camp property that require interaction with the public.
- Camps with core programming focused on wilderness trips located off camp property should implement strategies before and during camp sessions to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 transmission.
- Beginning 14 days before arriving at camp, staff and campers should limit their activities and maintain physical distancing from others.
- Consider asking staff and campers to do daily health checks for 14 days leading up to camp.
- Consider asking staff and campers to get tested for COVID-19 prior to departing for a wilderness trip camp. Anticipate that it may take several days to receive test results.
 - A negative COVID-19 test at one point in time does not mean a person will stay negative. A negative test result does not replace the need to continue frequent handwashing, avoid touching the face, and practice social distancing. These are our best tools to help prevent the spread of illness.
- Once campers and staff arrive at camp, ensure programming that prevents groups from intermixing before traveling to wilderness areas.
- When traveling in wilderness areas, have a tent available for each person, if possible, or multiple tents per group, where campers sleep head-to-toe.
- Do not wear face coverings while sleeping.

- Continue to implement daily health checks while on wilderness trips.
- Have evacuation plans in place, including information about how to evacuate the group should anyone develop symptoms consistent with COVID-19. This should include communication plans with local officials who may assist with the evacuation.
- Ensure that first aid kits include face coverings.

Consider your transportation plans

- Encourage families to transport their children to camp in private vehicles whenever feasible.
- Reduce the number of staff and campers on individual transportation buses or vans to allow people to spread out. Consider using visual cues to illustrate where campers may sit to adhere to social distancing. Siblings may sit together in the same seat.
 - These steps will help minimize transmission and allow for swift contact tracing if needed.
- Drivers should adhere to the following CDC guidelines: [What Rideshare, Taxi, Limo, and other Passenger Drivers-for-Hire Need to Know about COVID-19 \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/rideshare-drivers-for-hire.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/rideshare-drivers-for-hire.html).

Keep interactions with the public to a minimum when traveling to and from camps. Refer to the travel section below for more guidance on traveling to and from camp.

Screening at the bus

- Screen staff and campers before boarding vans or buses, or require parents and staff to perform screenings at home in the morning before boarding transportation vehicles.
- Follow the CDC screening process for children: [Examples of Screening Methods \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-childcare.html#ScreenChildren\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-childcare.html#ScreenChildren).
- Screening should include asking if anyone in their household has symptoms compatible with COVID-19.
 - Staff or campers with household members who are sick with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 are not allowed to attend camp for 14 days from their last exposure with that person.
- Consider using a system similar to this [Visitor and Employee Health Screening Checklist \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facilityhlthscreen.pdf\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facilityhlthscreen.pdf).

Be mindful of traveling

Consistent with state and federal guidance to limit the spread of COVID-19 and to protect our neighbors, Minnesotans are discouraged from unnecessary travel. If travel is necessary to engage in authorized outdoor recreation like camps, the following will help you minimize potential points of virus transmission:

- Travel as directly as possible to your destination, minimizing stops along the way.
- Bring all needed supplies with you.
- If you do need to stop for gas or supplies, wear a face covering.
- Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer after touching common surfaces (e.g., gas pumps, door handles, shared bathrooms, etc.).
- Do not travel if sick.

MDH strongly recommends limiting participation in summer programming to campers and staff who live in Minnesota or bordering states.

- Camps that are accepting campers or staff from geographic regions outside of Minnesota and bordering states should communicate that information to families.
- Parents must have a plan in place with the camp if their child becomes ill and needs to be sent home.
- Anyone arriving from international locations must follow the 14-day isolation and quarantine guidelines before arriving at camp: [After You Travel \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/after-travel-precautions.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/after-travel-precautions.html).
- Ask staff to limit their interaction with local communities when off-site to obtain only essential services, allowing interaction only sparingly, or find other ways to get supplies/services. Follow appropriate social distancing and health etiquette measures when interacting with the community.
- Remind staff to limit their interactions with others on their time off and to maintain social distancing.

Establish procedures with vendors

- Establish clear procedures with vendors that mitigate interaction with the camp community.
- Staff who interact with vendors should wear a face covering and practice social distancing.
- Allow for curbside drop-off and pick-up of services whenever possible.

Resources

- [Field Guide for Camps \(www.acacamps.org/resource-library/coronavirus/camp-business/camp-operations-guide-summer-2020\)](https://www.acacamps.org/resource-library/coronavirus/camp-business/camp-operations-guide-summer-2020)
- [Suggestions for Youth and Summer Camps \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/summer-camps.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/summer-camps.html)
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